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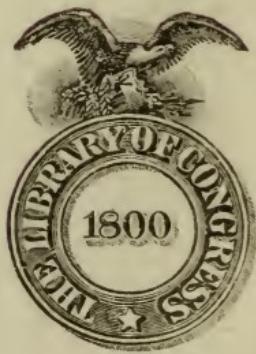
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A

BRIEF MEMOIR

CONCERNING

ABEL THOMAS,

A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

IN THE

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

COMPILED FROM AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS.



PHILADELPHIA:
BENJAMIN & THOMAS KITE,
NO. 20, NORTH THIRD STREET.

.....
1824.

BX 7795
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Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twenty-second day of January, in the forty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1824, Benjamin and Thomas Kite, of the said District, have deposited in this office the Title of a Book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit: "A Brief Memoir concerning Abel Thomas, a Minister of the "Gospel of Christ in the Society of Friends, compiled from authentic documents." In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, intituled, "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;"—And also to the Act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, 'An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

165420

Skerrett—Locust street,
Philadelphia.

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A

BRIEF MEMOIR

CONCERNING

ABEL THOMAS.

Dec 22/10.
“FOR our rejoicing is this, the testimony
“of our conscience, that in simplicity and
“godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but
“by the grace of God, we have had our con-
“versation in the world.” This may be fitly
applied to the subject of this memoir ; who,
having very little knowledge of literature, and
being naturally of a shy, diffident disposition,
associating in his youthful days but little with
those from whose experience and judgment
he could have acquired such an understanding
of men and things as is common, he was there-
by deprived of those advantages which in
more advanced life might have been really
beneficial to him.

He was the son of Jacob and Catharine
Thomas, who lived in Merion, Philadelphia

County ; his mother dying while he was an infant, his father married again, and having a large family, his circumstances slender, and removing into a remote place, where there was no school, Abel was of course deprived of the benefit of an education sufficient to qualify him for carrying on trade and business among men, other than as a common day-labourer. When about thirteen years old he became uneasy on account of his want of school learning, and with the scanty means which he could obtain in his father's house, by diligent application in leisure hours, he attained the knowledge of letters, so as to read, and through the kind assistance of a neighbour was enabled to write so as to be understood, though very deficient in spelling.

The meeting being about ten miles distant, although he had a desire to attend it, yet through the poverty of the family, and want of suitable convenience for that purpose, it does not appear that he ever was at a place of worship until he was about fifteen, then, with his father's leave, his elder brother and himself went to the meeting-house ; where, seeing a number of people sitting together in silence, the scene to him was not only novel,

but his mind not acquainted with the nature and awfulness of divine worship, and the requisite preparation of heart to come to a true knowledge of it, could not readily comprehend why it should be thus, or what should induce this quiet waiting and inward retirement to experience a qualification for the performance of this solemn duty.—After some time, an elderly Friend, under the influence of the love of the Gospel, stood up and spoke with such power and energy, as fully reached his state, opened his understanding, and gave him to see and feel in some degree, the efficacy of that Grace and Truth which came by Jesus Christ. Speaking of this meeting, he says, “it was not the words that confirmed me, but “something of a flavour [savour] that attend-“ed them, which I did evidently feel in my “heart, saying, this is the way, walk in it.”

Submitting to this divine visitation, he was drawn to labour fervently against the prevalence of his own corrupt will; for although he had been preserved in a moral life, or what is generally esteemed in the world an orderly regular conduct, yet now through the illumination of Divine Light, seeing that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked,

he found the necessity of daily watching against the motions and temptations to evil, that every thought and word might be brought to judgment, and the very important work of regeneration might, through the Lord's goodness, be gradually carried on, to the subduing of those dispositions and inclinations which man in his fallen state is prone to: and as he patiently, and with sincerity of soul, waited under the ministration of condemnation, he was often drawn into retirement, desiring that through the Spirit he might find grace to help in time of need, assuredly believing that without this, he was not able to make straight steps to his feet, or perform any thing that would be acceptable in the Divine sight. And in thankful commemoration of the mercy and paternal regard of his heavenly Father, manifested in drawing near to him in this the day of his many trials and besetments, he breaks forth in filial acknowledgment: "I can say "from all the powers of love in me, Blessing "and honour be given to the Father of mer- "cies through his dear son Jesus Christ."

He continued working very hard on his father's farm, and through the weight of his spirit and his watchful circumspect walk-

ing, a reformation was wrought in the family, much harmony subsisted among them, and great nearness of affectionate sympathy towards him in his various exercises prevailed: but believing that retirement in this the infant state of his religious experience was needful, he obtained liberty of his father to put up a little cabin, where he might be more secluded from company, and here much of his time was spent, when not engaged in secular concerns. One night as he was walking alone with his mind gathered into a solemn calm, he had a gentle intimation communicated to his spiritual ear, that it would be right for him to leave his father's house, and proceed in a north-easterly direction to such place as it would be proper for him to reside in for some time. As this was an unexpected opening, it brought considerable exercise upon him, through the weight whereof, and his fervent desire to be rightly directed, he became so reduced in his health and strength that he could scarcely perform his usual daily labour. He then opened the subject to his father, mentioning his belief that he should have to leave him, to live in another part of the country; his father replied, it would be hard to part with him; and under a feeling of the influence

of true love raised in their hearts, and which had increased and tenderly united them together, they both wept.

After some time, the family on due deliberation, resigning him to pursue what he apprehended to be his duty, he informed them that from the prospect presented to him, it did not appear that it would be further than about sixty miles, though he was entirely unacquainted with the country or the people where he should settle. His brother through tender sympathy accompanying him, they went on as far as Kingwood in New Jersey, where there was a settlement of Friends, and a monthly meeting established: to this meeting a certificate of removal was granted him, dated Fourth month, 1757. Here he engaged as a labourer on a farm with a person not professing with Friends. His diligence in business, and his humble, inoffensive demeanour, greatly attached the affection of his employer to him, and in his new abode finding it still needful to keep in patience and watchfulness under his religious exercises, carefully attending the meetings of Friends, it is believed that in this place his mouth was first opened in the ministry of the gospel, and

in due time, with the concurrence of Friends, he performed a religious visit to some of the meetings in New Jersey.

He staid in this neighbourhood between four and five years, married and lived some time among Friends near Mount Holly; but his wife dying, and believing it would be right for him to return to the vicinity of his father's residence, he accordingly removed, and in a few years after married his second wife in the year 1777. Some time after this he removed with his family and resided at Exeter, in Pennsylvania, maintaining a good example in life and conversation, and diligent in the attendance of meetings for worship and discipline. His labours in the exercise of the gift of gospel ministry committed to him, were savoury and truly edifying, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power; and however singular and unpolished his general deportment might appear to some, it was evident to his brethren, that the primary care and bent of his mind was so to live as to be in fellowship with the Father and his son Jesus Christ.

On a retrospective view of his retired, abstemious life, his general seclusion from the company of the youth with whom he was acquainted, and the great change which a subjection to the cross of Christ effected, he remarked that whenever he gave way to his natural inclination, and sought to please the vain and airy minds of the youth in their folly, jesting, &c. though he said or did nothing that men in general would condemn, yet the swift witness in his own breast would rise up against him, bring him into judgment and condemnation, and with much painful suffering under the purifying baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, he had to wait before he could again experience the lifting up of the light of the Lord's countenance upon him, and know a communion with him in spirit, that sets the soul at liberty, and gives it a true taste of eternal salvation; and in a sense of the Lord's mercy and divine compassion to humble penitent sinners, he breaks forth in pious ejaculation, "Blessing and honour be forever given unto the Father of mercies through his dear son Jesus Christ—the Father and the Son are one: God is a Spirit, and in spirit he is to be known and conversed with by the children of men, who

“endeavour to follow him according to the
“manifestation of his will, without respect of
“persons, and as he doth know that we are
“in a miserable state without him, not able
“to do any thing without his help, he makes
“the first offer of acquaintance with us, [and]
“from the great love he hath to his creature
“man, speaks in the inward parts by his son
“Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, show-
“ing us the way to please him, and also
“points out the way to everlasting misery;
“and there is no sincere-hearted traveller
“that desires to follow the instructions of that
“Grace that teacheth to deny ungodliness
“and the world’s lusts, to live soberly and
“watchful unto prayer, that will be at a loss
“to know how to behave in his presence.
“Our Lord said, that a man must be born
“again, otherwise he cannot see the kingdom
“of heaven; as Christians we are bound to
“believe this, and endeavouring to turn our
“attention heavenward more and more, ac-
“cording to the manifestations of that Grace
“or Light, which we are all graciously fa-
“voured with, by and through Jesus Christ,
“who hath bought us with a price, and that
“not without blood; it is possible for us
“through obedience to obtain the kingdom.

“ We frequently feel that there is another
“ usurping limited power, which by subtle
“ delusions works upon the natural passions
“ of men, in order to hinder them from laying
“ up treasure in heaven : thus we find there
“ are two teachers or powers opposite to each
“ other, and he to whom we yield our mem-
“ bers servants to obey, his servants we are.”

In the year 1778, after much close exercise from a prospect of religious duty which he opened to, and was united with by, Exeter Monthly Meeting, of which he was a member, he proceeded on a visit to some meetings in New Jersey, and in part of the state of New York, having for his companion James Thomas, a member of the same meeting. As this was in the time of the Revolutionary War, and the city of New York then in possession of the British troops, travelling in our country was rendered extremely difficult, through the great suspicion which was continually excited in the minds of the different contending parties, under an idea that persons going from their places of residence in this season of commotion must have some sinister motives, and would, as opportunities presented, prove inimical to the cause in which they

were respectively engaged : thus in many instances even going to religious meetings, was, in the apprehensions of the persons in power, deemed as sufficient evidence of treacherous designs, concealed under the plausible, yet insincere, profession of religious duty. Accordingly, after visiting several meetings in the state of New York, returning into New Jersey, they were stopped by the military, who, finding that they were innocent men, discharged them, but soon after were again apprehended, taken to Newark, and after some detention, sent under guard as prisoners to Princeton, where they were examined by the governor, (Livingston,) and council, being supposed to be guilty of treason ; before whom he made the following defence, viz.

*“The words of a prisoner who had liberty by
“the Governor and Council to speak in his
“own defence, supposed by law to be guilty
“of death.*

*“I am glad of liberty to speak in my own
“defence before the Governor and his Coun-
“cil. I hope you are moderate, consi-
“derate men, and will hear me patiently*

“ while I speak forth the words of truth and
“ soberness. We live, when at home, in Berks
“ County, Pennsylvania ; I have been look-
“ ed upon as a minister of the gospel amongst
“ the people called Quakers, from about
“ the twenty-second year of my age ; and
“ under the exercise thereof have travelled
“ much in America, and visited the meetings
“ of Friends generally from Nova Scotia to
“ Georgia, and many of them several times
“ over. And in this great work I have ever
“ observed the good rules of discipline used
“ among us. When I have felt my mind
“ drawn in love towards my brethren in any
“ part of America, I have endeavoured first
“ to get fully satisfied in my mind whether
“ it was the Lord’s will or not ; and then,
“ after being confirmed by turning the fleece,
“ that it was his requiring, I have always
“ laid it before my brethren at the monthly
“ meeting for their approbation, and in like
“ manner so at this time, but never met with
“ so much trouble upon the like occasion be-
“ fore ; for after I was fully satisfied it was
“ the Lord’s requiring, by looking at the dif-
“ ficulties and dangers I should be exposed
“ to in crossing the lines of contending par-
“ ties, I became weak and fearful : I thought

“ I would mention my concern to the elders
“ in a private way, which I did, but received
“ no encouragement from them to speak of it
“ to the monthly meeting. I then concluded
“ to take no more thought about it, fearing it
“ was a delusion; but I was followed with
“ the judgments of God for disobedience, in-
“ somuch that the nearest connexions in life
“ became withered in my view; and in this
“ sad condition I came to a conclusion that I
“ would endeavour to obey the Lord’s re-
“ quiring, although I might lose my natural
“ life in the pursuit thereof.

“ I spoke of it to the monthly meeting, and
“ after solid consideration they gave me a
“ certificate signed by the elders and heads of
“ the meeting, which I have in my pocket.
“ We then proceeded on our journey, and
“ crossed Delaware at Coryell’s ferry, and
“ visited the meetings generally until we
“ came to the North (Hudson) River, which
“ we crossed about four miles below Pough-
“ keepsie, and rode through the town some
“ miles eastward, to a meeting, and so
“ visited the meetings generally in that go-
“ vernment without any interruption until we
“ came to White Plains, where we were stop-

" ped by the guard. We told the lieutenant
" we were going to Mamaroneck meeting; he
" gave us leave to go, but afterwards sent a
" horseman for us, who informed us we must
" have a few lines from the colonel before we
" should go. We rode back four or five
" miles to the colonel's, who gave us a pass
" to go to Mamaroneck meeting, and from
" thence we went to West Chester. After
" meeting we went to the water side to go
" over to Long Island; there was no boat
" there: we made a smoke for a signal to the
" ferryman on the other side to come for us,
" which he did; but informed us what we
" might depend upon, that he was under an
" obligation to send all strangers that he
" brought over to the colonel's at Flushing.
" When we were over, he sent a guard with
" us to the colonel's. We informed him our
" business on the island. His answer was
" to us, If that was our business, it was a
" pity to hinder us. He readily gave us a
" permit to travel through the island. We
" visited eight meetings. I think we were
" at a meeting every day we staid there, and
" when our service was over, we crossed the
" Sound to New York, where we had two
" meetings; and when we were clear of that

" place, we, with the assistance of our friends,
" got a pass from the chief commanding offi-
" cer of that place, to cross the North River
" at Powles Hook. When we were over, I
" gave that pass to the colonel, who went
" up stairs in a private chamber. While I
" stood at the door there came an officer, (as
" I thought by his dress,) and asked me if I
" was not afraid to go among the rebels. I
" told him I was innocent, and was not afraid
" to go among my own countrymen. The
" colonel sent for me to come up to him; he
" gave me our pass, with an endorsement on
" the back of it, to pass the picket guards,
" and offered me a newspaper, and told me
" I might divert myself as I rode, in reading
" it. I told him I had nothing to do with
" politics, neither did I incline to read news-
" papers. He told me I was at my liberty,
" and so we parted. We had not gone but
" a few rods from the door until a soldier
" commanded us to stop; he began to untie
" our great coats and search our bags.

" When we were in New York, our friends
" told us of a judge whose name was Fell,
" that had been a prisoner there thirteen
" months. When he was first taken he was

“ put in the Provost, and he, being a tender
“ man, in close confinement, was not likely to
“ continue long. We were informed that
“ ten of our friends joined together to do their
“ utmost, by treating with the officers, for his
“ liberty in the town, who at length obtained
“ it, by being bound in the sum of one thou-
“ sand pounds for his good behaviour in the
“ city. This judge behaved himself so well
“ as to gain the good will of the officers, who
“ gave him liberty to go home to his family,
“ upon parole of honour. Our friends con-
“ sidering the difficulties we might meet with
“ when out of the English lines, thought it
“ best for me, (as the judge was yet in town,)
“ to go to him. A friend went with me, whose
“ name is Henry Haydock. After that friend,
“ who had long been acquainted with me,
“ had recommended me to him, and made
“ known to the judge my circumstances, he
“ said he was a prisoner, and could do but
“ little for me, but what he could he would.
“ He informed me he had a son who was a
“ major, that lived about Hackinsack: if I
“ could find him, and tell him that I had seen
“ his father, he believed he would show me
“ kindness; and if he saw him before I did,
“ he would speak to him concerning me. I

"asked him if he dare write a line to him.
"The judge thought it not safe. He gave
"me his name on a small piece of paper, and
"told me his son would know his hand,
"(which I have in my pocket.)

"We went on our journey from Powles
"Hook, and travelled near twenty miles,
"when we were stopped by the guards, our
"bags taken off and searched. We inquired
"for major Fell. They told us he lived
"many miles from that place; and informed
"us of a major who lived four or five miles
"back, where we went without a guard. Af-
"ter that major examined us and searched our
"pocket-books, and had seen judge Fell's
"hand-writing, which he knew, he gave us
"a pass to the highest officer in Elizabeth-
"town, which I have with me. We went
"forward through Hackinsack, and came to
"Passaick River, then crossed the ferry to a
"little village, where we were stopped by
"the guard, our bags again taken off and
"searched thoroughly, but nothing found that
"was offensive. Soon after there came along
"the road a major in a waggon, who stopped
"and came to us, and in a very furious man-
"ner, asked us where we had been. I told

“ him we had been to New York. He asked
“ me if I did not know that there was a strict
“ law against it. I told him I thought that
“ law was not made for such men as we were.
“ Then he, in a great rage, ordered the guard
“ to bring us down to Newark ; and we were
“ had there before a judge, a justice, and two
“ majors. After examination, we were sent
“ to the guard-house, where we were closely
“ confined that night. The next morning we
“ were sent for to the major’s house, where
“ was a justice, who read to us the law which
“ we had not before heard ; by which we
“ understood our lives were forfeited. We
“ were then had to the judge’s house, where
“ our guard received orders to take us to the
“ governor’s. The judge and his officers
“ blamed us much, that we did not go to the
“ governor’s at Poughkeepsie, [in the state
“ of New York,] in order to get a pass to
“ go to York or Long Island. We did
“ not know it was death by the law, until we
“ had rode between thirty and forty miles
“ below Poughkeepsie, and then we did not
“ know that it was possible for a stranger to
“ obtain a permit from the governor to go
“ within the English lines. And concerning
“ deceiving the colonel at the White Plains,

" in not telling him we were going to New York, if he had asked me the question, I believe I should have told him the truth.

" When I heard it was death by the law to go to Long Island and New York, I was struck with a serious sadness, and did not know what to do. To go forward, it was death by the laws of the land—and to go homeward, it was death by the law of the Spirit of life. But after considering the matter calmly in myself, I concluded to go forward, with a strong resolution to keep myself entirely clear of those crimes for which the law was made, and in so doing I should be innocent before God, and more excusable before my countrymen at my return. And I can assure the governor and his council, that I have not said or done any thing knowingly or intendingly, that would injure particulars, or my countrymen in general: and let the governor and his council judge whether I am guilty of death, or further confinement. If guilty, I must endeavour to suffer patiently, according to your laws; but if the governor and council should judge me innocent, I desire a pass to go home, and liberty in it to go back to

“Plainfield, Rahway, Shrewsbury, Squan,
“Squankum, Barnegat, Egg Harbours, and
“Cape May, from whence I intend to go
“home, if the Lord permit.”

It would seem as though this was all that he said; but his humility has operated to the suppression of what he further expressed to the council: that, if this his visit should be judged a capital offence, which must be punished with death, that he only might suffer, and his companion be permitted to go home, as his only motive was merely to accompany him in the journey. The governor and council, after hearing this simple, undisguised relation, being conscious that nothing but a sense of religious duty could have induced him to undertake such a journey, in a time of extreme difficulty and peril, freely, and with that magnanimity which ever accompanies genuine benevolence, granted the following pass, viz.

“PRINCETON, 26th May, 1778.

“*Council of Safety, State of New Jersey.*

“Abel Thomas and James Thomas, inhabitants of Pennsylvania, being sent under guard to the President and Council of

“ Safety by two magistrates of Newark, for
“ having been into the enemy’s lines in the
“ city of New York and Long Island without
“ passports, and suspected of designs injuri-
“ ous to the liberties of America: the Board,
“ upon hearing their defence, were satisfied
“ of their innocence, and have reason to be-
“ lieve, that their journey to the several places
“ which they have visited, was undertaken
“ on a religious account, and agreeable to
“ their declared intention to the meeting held
“ at Maiden Creek the 25th day of March,
“ 1778, of performing a religious visit to the
“ meetings of Friends in part of the Jerseys
“ and part of New York governments. The
“ Board therefore discharges the said Abel
“ and James Thomas from their present con-
“ finement: and they being further desirous
“ to visit the meetings of their Friends at
“ Plainfield, Rahway, Shrewsbury, Squan,
“ Squankum, Barnegat, Great and Little Egg
“ Harbour, and at the Capes, and this go-
“ vernment being unwilling to obstruct any
“ society in the exercise of their religion, the
“ said Abel and James Thomas are permit-
“ ted to pass to the nine places last mention-
“ ed, and then to the State of Pennsylvania.

“ WILL. LIVINGSTON,
“ *President.*”

Some time after his return home, his mind was drawn in the love of the Gospel to several places in Pennsylvania, and two of the adjoining states, which being spread before the monthly meeting of Exeter, they granted a certificate, dated Eleventh month, 1779, leaving him at liberty to perform a religious visit to the meetings of Friends in parts of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. And also in 1781, with the unity of the monthly meeting, and having Amos Lee for his companion, he visited meetings in Virginia and Carolina, passing through very great difficulties, as the country was much infested by a lawless, murderous banditti, who, for the sake of plunder, frequently shot down innocent people as they were riding along the roads. When at Camden, in South Carolina, they were taken up as prisoners by the American army. Being kept with the soldiery several days, they at length obtained a discharge, as appears by the following extract of a narrative which he sent to his friends, viz.

*“To Friends of Exeter Monthly Meeting,
Berks County, Pennsylvania.*

“DEAR FRIENDS,

“I believe it my duty to give you a short account of the reason of my long stay from

“ my family and friends, and why I did not
“ return with my companion, and the reason
“ why my companion left me ; as also to give
“ you to understand, that I am afflicted, but
“ not forsaken. When we came to a meet-
“ ing at Pedee, in the south part of North
“ Carolina, a large American army passed by
“ us into South Carolina, and encamped in
“ the road to a little meeting, not far from
“ Camden. I thought I saw clearly, that it
“ was best for us to follow them, and we gave
“ ourselves up, as prisoners, to the captain
“ of the provost-guard. The officers gathered
“ about us. Our horses were taken from us; but
“ our saddles and saddle-bags we had with us
“ in our confinement. Our papers were soon
“ demanded, and read over, and we were
“ closely examined : some of our papers were
“ sent to the head general. They gave us to
“ expect we should have a pass to go home,
“ if we would promise to go ; but I could not
“ make such a promise, being bound in spirit
“ to do my endeavours to visit Friends in
“ South Carolina, if not in Georgia. In the
“ time of our confinement, we had the com-
“ pany of several officers, one at a time. They
“ behaved civil, but were full of talk and
“ foolish imaginations concerning us. Let

“ me never forget my Master’s kindness in a
“ time of need : I had talk enough for them
“ all, which they could not gainsay or con-
“ demn. At length they concluded, yea, one
“ of them told me, that I was a crafty fellow,
“ chosen by our Yearly Meeting in Pennsyl-
“ vania to survey the southern states, to the
“ disadvantage of our country, and for the
“ advancement of the British troops, or words
“ to that effect. We were often pressed to
“ promise to go home, which I as often punc-
“ tually refused; giving them such reasons
“ for it which they could not answer.

“ We gave ourselves up to the captain on
“ Sixth day in the afternoon, and on First day
“ morning following, about an hour or two
“ before day, there was a great stir in the
“ camp, the officers riding to and fro, order-
“ ing the soldiers to make haste and parade
“ ready to march. When our captain had
“ got his men in order, with many prisoners,
“ he honoured us so much as to rank us next
“ to him, and so he marched on with his
“ naked sword in his hand, and we following
“ him. We marched near twenty miles, and
“ then encamped. When we first set out, I
“ was thoughtful how we should get along,

“for several reasons, if they marched far.
“We had eaten sparingly the day before,
“and then had but a little more than one bis-
“cuit and a little piece of meat between us
“both, and had our bags and great coats to
“carry ; and what made it seem more trying,
“the sand was deep and slavish, and my
“boots stiff and heavy. The thoughts of
“these things, for a time, seemed grievous.
“I began to inquire for my [Divine] Mas-
“ter, and when I had found him, I conversed
“with him as though he was present, and told
“him as though he knew it not, that I had left
“my dear wife and all that I had that was near
“and dear to me for the love I had for Him,
“and did entreat, that he would not leave
“me now in a time of trial : and he was
“pleased to hear me, and with an encourag-
“ing language, conveyed to my understand-
“ing as with these words, ‘Fear not, my
“servant, I will be with thee.’ The praise
“of all be given to Him, for he is worthy :
“he did fulfil his promise to my admiration.

“We marched fast. I ate but little more
“than half a biscuit that day, and yet could
“not perceive myself hungry or weary. I
“found freedom to be cheerful in conversa-

“tion with the captain and with his men.
“The officers passing and repassing, gene-
“rally took notice of us. Some of them asked
“how we were. I answered as I felt, with
“as much cheerfulness as I could. We were
“now encamped in the wilderness under
“guard, but had liberty to walk out, one at
“a time. I went out that afternoon, from
“tent to tent, amongst the officers, making
“known to them our circumstance, where we
“desired to go, and what our business was.
“One of them promised to let us go in the
“morning. I returned to my companion,
“laid down by him, but could not sleep, al-
“though I had not slept much for several
“nights. Remarkable it appeared to me,
“that I should be well and hearty and lively
“without much food or sleep. My dear
friends, search for the reason: I believe it
• to be the Lord’s doings, and it is marvel-
• lous in my view.

“The next morning I went to seek the
“officer who had promised to give us our li-
“berty, and after some time found him, and
“put him in mind of his promise. He seem-
“ed to quibble, and put it off. I thought he
“intended to weary me out, that so I would

“promise to go home. I went to the head
“officer, and made my complaint, and he,
“in a friendly way, told me that we should
“soon be released. Soon after, that officer
“who had promised us a permit, called me
“to his tent, and wrote a pass for us; and
“when he had read it to me, my spirit was
“raised with zeal for my Master’s honour,
“and so I told him, that I was not to fear or
“be frightened by men when in my Master’s
“cause. Must we indeed go right home
“without a guard? Nay, send a guard with
“us for the safety of thy country. Yes, we
“have concluded to go homeward about one
“hundred and fifty miles, to a settlement of
“Friends about New Garden, and when we
“have visited them, if I find my mind easy
“to return home to my wife and children, I
“shall be glad; but if I find my Master hath
“any more service for me in this part of the
“country, I desire to be enabled to return to
“South Carolina, if not to Georgia, visiting
“my friends; and if I should return through
“this army, when thou seest me ride on, then
“remember what I tell thee now. *Officer*—
“If you return here again, you may expect
“severity. *Answer*—I do not fear what
“your army can do to me, for I know that

" you can have no power over this body, except you receive it from above for some good end. He then looked me in the face, and perhaps saw the tears begin to run down my cheeks : he gave me his hand, and wished me a good journey, got on his horse, and rode off.

" Our horses were given to us ; we parted with our captain (of the provost) as with a friend, and with a raised voice bid his men farewell, and wished them a better way of living, which they returned, with gladness for our release. We had about sixty miles to a friend's house at Pedee, from whence we came. I thought our being amongst them was no disgrace to our society. O how good it is for us to live near the Truth ! walking in the Light, we should be at no loss to know what to do, nor where to go, nor how to behave ourselves before men for the glory of God, and for the safety and peace of our souls. I have been much preserved in such a state since I left you : I am unworthy of such great kindness. The thoughts of the many days, weeks and months, which, in time past, I have spent in the unnecessary cares of this world, do at times grieve me : that, and the sense I have of the state of

“the churches, is the greatest affliction which
“I meet with. I find hard work amongst
“Friends in these southern provinces, but
“have been helped by my kind Master, to
“proclaim his great name, although in a
“clumsy and uncustomary way: I generally
“feel relief to my burdened, troubled soul.

“I am in a few days intending to set out
“for South Carolina again, not knowing what
“may befall me there. My greatest concern
“is, that I might be profitable to my Master.
“I cannot see the end of my journey, nor the
“road home, so clearly as usual. It may be
“you may see my face no more; and if it be
“so, I entreat you, in that love which I feel
“for you, that you show kindness to my dear
“wife, and watch over my children for good.
“The reason of my beloved companion leav-
“ing me—I first proposed it to his considera-
“tion for your sakes, lest you might be un-
“easy; and after considering and looking at
“it, found freedom so to do. It is no small
“cross for me to part with him: we have
“travelled together in love, as brethren in
“tribulation. My love to you all, my friends
“and neighbours.

“ABEL THOMAS.

“New Garden, North Carolina,
Fifth Month, 6th, 1781.”

After being some time in the vicinity of New Garden, North Carolina, Amos Lee, finding his mind released from further prosecution of the journey, it was their judgment, that it would be best for him to return homeward; but being closely united in the bonds of Gospel fellowship, and in that inward endearment which, through the love of Christ, connects the real members of his church, it was no easy matter for them to part: yet, seeing it necessary, with the tenderest desires for their mutual preservation, resigning each other into the hand of Him, who in great condescension, had hitherto preserved them in much tribulation, they separated. Abel, after this, not feeling easy to omit making a further essay towards the fulfilment of his prospects of religious duty, proceeded to South Carolina, where the trials of faith, and the remarkable deliverances vouchsafed to him, in this perilous travel, is in some degree set forth in the following relation.

“ In a thankful sense of preservation by a
“ strong arm through many dangers and deep
“ conflicts, both within and without, which I
“ met with in my journey through South Ca-
“ rolina and Georgia, do I write these lines,

“in order to encourage the weak, the poor
“afflicted people of God, to trust in his pow-
“erful arm, which doth work salvation and
“deliverance, and by bringing strange and
“unexpected things to pass. He is greatly
“to be feared, and loved, and adored, by his
“afflicted children. They who know him,
“and do their endeavour not only to know
“but to obey, have no reason to distrust his
“care and great power to preserve, not only
“from being taken by the secret and subtle
“invasions of Satan, but also out of the hands
“of bloody and unreasonable men. These
“things I have experienced in the great
“deeps, and do certainly know that the
“Lord’s arm is not shortened that it cannot
“save, nor is his ear heavy that it cannot hear.
“When I consider my own weakness and
“inability as a man, and as a servant en-
“gaged in so great a work, and also the
“grievous besetments and terrifying storms
“in which the subtle serpent arose against
“me, my mind is humbled; well knowing
“who preserved me in the depth of distress,
“when my soul was taken with fear, and my
“body almost given to the wild beasts of the
“wilderness: then the language of my soul
“was, Make haste, my beloved, for I am al-

" most overwhelmed. I will make known to
" my brethren his wonderful works, and relate
" to them my travails and the exercise of my
" mind, and give the praise to the great God
" of power through his dear son Jesus Christ,
" who is worthy forever.

" When we came near South Carolina, we
" were told that the country was all in an up-
" roar. Scouting parties from both sides were
" riding to and fro, killing one another, and
" also peaceable men which they found tra-
" velling, except they knew them to be on
" their side: and that they had determined
" to take no prisoners, which we found to be
" in a great measure true. When I heard
" this sorrowful news, it took deep hold of
" my mind; for I had entertained a thought
" that I should die in that country, and as
" times were, I thought I should not die a
" natural death, but that I should be barba-
" rously cut down by the light-horse. I
" searched deeply to know whether my con-
" cern was right, and my Master was pleased
" to manifest to me, that it was his will I
" should go forward. We travelled on, vi-
" siting meetings, and generally alone, in-
" quiring the road. Friends were fearful.

"They were advised by the most moderate
"persons in power, to stay on their farms,
"except going to their particular meetings.
"We met with none of these cruel men, al-
"though we could hear of them almost every
"day, until we got within ten miles of the
"British garrison at Ninety-six. We then
"approached a large scouting party upon
"a hill: we could see them afar off, and
"when we came up to them, we found they
"were much afraid. We showed the major
"our certificates, and asked him if we might
"go forward. He said he would not hinder
"us, if we would venture our lives; for the
"rebels, (as they called them,) had got be-
"tween them and their garrison, and were
"killing all before them. I told him that I
"did not trust altogether to man for preser-
"vation. We rode on, but had not gone far,
"until he and a negro came riding after us.
"He ordered his negro to ride on some dis-
"tance before, and if he saw any man, to ride
"back and tell him. The major rode in be-
"tween me and my companion. I felt uneasy
"in my mind while he rode there, and we
"endeavoured to shun his company, but could
"not. His negro wheeled round his horse,
"and hallooed to his master, 'Rebels! re-

“bels!” The major stopped, and turned
“about to run; then calling to his man, asked,
“‘How many?’ He answered, ‘two.’ He
“wheeled back again, and out with his pis-
“tols, and rode furiously towards them; but
“found they were his own men.

“We travelled on, lay in the woods not
“far from the garrison, and next morning,
“passing through the town, were detained
“some time by the picket guard. Being
“conducted to the head officer, he appeared
“kind to us, and invited us to breakfast with
“them. I acknowledged their kindness, but
“told them I desired not to be detained then,
“for I expected to be called to an account for
“passing through that place. They, with
“sorrow, signified they would not detain us
“to our hurt; and we were told a few hours
“afterwards, that general Green surrounded
“the garrison. We visited the meetings on
“towards Georgia, and were told, it was as
“much as our lives were worth to go over
“Savannah river; that the Indians and white
“people were joined together in their bloody
“designs. We had been so remarkably pre-
“served hitherto, that we did not much fear
“them: rode the river in great danger, the

“ water being so rapid, and the bottom so
“ rocky, that I never rode in such a dismal
“ place before. It was well we had a pilot who
“ led us amongst the rocks; for I thought if our
“ horses had stumbled, they must have been
“ washed away by the rapidity of the stream;
“ but we got over safe, and travelled on to-
“ wards the settlement of Friends: and while
“ riding a small path in the wilderness, two
“ men overtook us, and in a furious manner,
“ with great rage, ordered us to stand, and
“ with terrifying language were raising their
“ guns to shoot us. I desired them to stop a
“ little while, that we might clear ourselves
“ of those high charges. They gave us a
“ little time, but soon broke out in terrible
“ rage, with blasphemous language, and one
“ of them was cocking his gun. I desired
“ them to have a little patience; I had some-
“ thing to say: and so we remained for about
“ ten minutes. Then they turned round to
“ consult between themselves privately. I
“ heard one of them ask, if they should kill
“ us; the other answered, ‘I hate to kill
“ them:’ and after some more private dis-
“ course, turned to us, and ordered us off our
“ horses; they got on ours, led their own,
“ and so rode off.

“ Our pilot riding a mean beast, his habit
“ also being mean, they said but little to him,
“ and took nothing from him. Being now
“ left in the wilderness, we soon came to a
“ conclusion to return to Friends at Long-
“ cane, from whence we came; but how to
“ cross that large and rapid river Savannah,
“ we could not conceive: it looked unlikely
“ that we could ride two at a time on so weak
“ a creature, neither could we wade it. We
“ sought for a canoe, and seeing one on the
“ other side, called, in order to get over. A
“ young man came to the canoe, and inquired
“ who we were—asking if we were rebels.
“ My companion told him we were friends to
“ the rebels. He then said, we were damned
“ tories, and should not come over. We
“ then went down the river to a place where
“ some had forded in low water. My com-
“ panion and pilot stripped themselves, and
“ being good swimmers, they got on the weak
“ beast, with their clothes between them, in-
“ tending, if the creature sunk, to swim out,
“ and if they got safe over, one of them would
“ come for me. I could see but little of the
“ horse until they got to the other side, which
“ was, I suppose, about two hundred yards:
“ sometimes the water ran over the saddle,

“ and my companion coming back for me, we
“ also landed safe, then travelled on to Wil-
“ liam Miles’s, from whence we came, and a
“ kind friend he was to us.

“ This was a trying time to me; not so much
“ on account of the loss of my property, as
“ for the absence of my Beloved, who had
“ been my preserver and conductor. I was
“ afraid I had offended him in going so far.
“ I endeavoured to keep still and quiet in my
“ mind, and soon perceived I must return to
“ that bloody place again: and when I made it
“ known to my companion, it was grievous to
“ him, and after a time of silence, he told me
“ we had been so remarkably preserved whilst
“ we were within our prescribed limits, he
“ thought we had no business there; if we had,
“ it appeared to him unlikely that we should
“ have been stopped: and further, that I had
“ not liberty by certificate to visit the meetings
“ in Georgia. This discourse from a valuable
“ friend, so highly esteemed by me, and also
“ by his friends in general, struck me deeply.
“ I told him I desired to look more deeply
“ into it. This was the next morning after
“ we came to the aforesaid friend’s house. I
“ inquired for work, and kept closely at it for
“ two weeks, my companion not being able

“to do much; my desire was, to keep him
“and myself from being chargeable. At
“that time I could see no way home, nor the
“time to go back again. For several days I
“was in great distress, and there was none
“to help me; often looking towards my dear
“wife and children mourning for me, and I
“not knowing how long I should be detain-
“ed there, or whether ever I should see them
“again.

“One night as I lay bemoaning my sad
“condition, as though I had offended my
“Master, whom I had loved above all, I can-
“not express the anguish of my soul at that
“time; and in the depth of distress, a lan-
“guage livingly sprang in my mind, ‘Stand
“still:’ a language which I understood at
“Camden when a prisoner there, was now
“with life revived and renewed, ‘Fear not,
“my servant, I will be with thee.’ O, how
“was my troubled soul revived! All doubts
“and fears vanished away, and in this plea-
“sant and favoured state I said, ‘It is enough,
“Lord! I want no further confirmation; I
“will go or will stay at thy word, only be
“with me.’ Indeed, the place where I was
“seemed so pleasant for some time after, that
“I thought I could live there all my days,

“ if it was his will, without being much concerned about home.* I soon informed my companion, that I intended to travel towards Georgia, and that, as by his discourse a few days before, he thought he had no business there, I should leave him at his liberty; but desired he would stay here for me a certain time, and then return, if I came not. After serious consideration, he told me he could not be easy to let me go alone, and if I went, and died, he would die with me. A day soon appeared for me to travel on, and also to write a letter to general Green, who was then about thirty miles off, fighting against Ninety-six. He soon read my letter, and granted my request, as follows:

“ *Mr. Abel Thomas, and Mr. Thomas Winslow, Long-cane.*

“ CAMP, before Ninety-six, June 7th, 1781.

“ GENTLEMEN,

“ Your letter of the 6th is before me. From the good opinion I have of the people of

* When relating this occurrence to a friend, he said in substance, That the room was so filled with light, attended with such consolation in the Divine presence, that in the flowings of heavenly joy and peace he felt no wants to be supplied.

“ your profession, being bred and educated
“ among them, I am persuaded your visit is
“ purely religious, and in this persuasion
“ have granted you a pass; and I shall be
“ happy if your ministry shall contribute to
“ the establishment of morality and brotherly
“ kindness among the people, than which no
“ country ever wanted it more. I am sensi-
“ ble your principles and professions are op-
“ posed to war, but I know you are fond of
“ both political and religious liberty. This
“ is what we are contending for, and by the
“ blessings of God, we hope to establish them
“ upon such a broad basis, as to put it out
“ of the power of our enemies to shake
“ their foundation. In this laudable endea-
“ vor, I expect at least to have the good
“ wishes of your people, as well for their own
“ sakes as for ours, who wishes to serve them
“ upon all occasions, not inconsistent with the
“ public good.

“ I am, Gentlemen,
“ Your most obedient
“ Humble servant,
“ NATHANIEL GREEN.”

Head-Quarters, June 7th, 1781.

“ Abel Thomas has General Green’s per-
“ mission to pass and repass through this
“ country, behaving with propriety.

“ NATH. PENDLETON,
Aid de Camp.”

“ We set out early in the morning on foot,
“ serious and deep thoughts attending my
“ mind. We seemed like sheep going a se-
“ cond time before the slaughter, without any
“ outward obligation : travelled about twelve
“ miles, crossed Savannah river, and came
“ up with a colonel and his men, who had
“ got there the night before. A captain look-
“ ing earnestly at us, began to examine what
“ our business was, and hearing the account
“ we gave, (slender indeed in his view,) viz.
“ “ to visit our brethren at Wrightsborough,
“ he appeared surprised and mistrustful;
“ asked us for a pass, which we gave him :
“ he ordered us to follow him, and led us to
“ the colonel. Our certificates, general Green’s
“ friendly letter, and permission, being read
“ to him, they asked why we were travelling
“ on foot. We told them we were robbed
“ not far from that place, about two weeks

“ before. They said they had heard of us
“ down at Augusta, and if we would stay,
“ they thought they could find our horses, for
“ they knew who had them. And as I was
“ describing my horse, a soldier said, he
“ thought my horse was in the company; and
“ I soon found the horse, saddle, and bridle:
“ for that wicked man had just ridden up. I
“ informed the colonel, who had him imme-
“ diately taken and put under guard, and
“ then sent out a scout after the other, who
“ had my companion’s mare, saddle, and sad-
“ dle-bags, and confined him also, which
“ greatly surprised them. They sent for us,
“ and desired we would forgive them. We
“ inquired where our goods were. They
“ readily informing us, we told them, that
“ all we wanted was what we had lost, and
“ that they would repent and amend their
“ ways of living; that we could forgive them
“ and do them a kindness if it lay in our
“ power, although they had injured us. They
“ appeared low in their minds, for the colonel
“ declared they should be hanged, as many
“ accusations of their wickedness and barba-
“ rity came against them.

“ We got the principal part of our goods,

"lodged with the soldiery that night, and
"next morning rode to Friends' settlement,
"I hope, with thankful hearts, and visited
"the meetings of Friends both at Wrights-
"borough and at New Purchase: and find-
"ing my mind clear, turned my face home-
"wards, and as I rode, a hope renewedly
"revived, that I should see my little family
"again. I felt them near to my heart, al-
"though by computation eight hundred miles
"distant from them. We crossed Savannah
"river, and travelled towards Ninety-six,
"where the armies were fighting; and when
"we drew near, became doubtful how we
"should pass, as the cannon were firing fast,
"and the road we were in, leading imme-
"diately to the British garrison, we knew
"of no way to escape; but a friendly man
"overtook us, and told us that he would
"pilot us round, and a difficult path it proved;
"sometimes we were close by where they
"were fighting, or firing upon the garrison:
"and as we passed through the skirts of ge-
"neral Green's army, the cross officer, whose
"prisoner I had been when at Camden, saw
"me ride on as I before had told him. He
"called to me: 'What! old fellow, are you
"there?' I answered him according to his

“ question. He asked how I came to deceive
“ him. I replied, I had not, and that he
“ knew it. He came to me, took me by the
“ hand in a friendly way, and said, he hoped
“ I had done no harm. I told him, I did not
“ intend harm; and with some more friendly
“ conversation we parted. Just before we
“ got round into the road, general Green’s
“ men fell upon a fort or redoubt but a little
“ way from us, making a terrible noise.
“ There was a great stir among the people,
“ some running one way, and some another;
“ some hiding behind trees: we rode smartly
“ on, and could hear them for about seven
“ miles without intermission. We passed
“ on towards North Carolina, without any
“ other remarkable interruption. As for my
“ service and exercise in the ministry, I have
“ left it to the judgment of my brethren.
“ My Master had a service for me there,
“ and I trusted my life in his hand, travelled
“ on, and so obtained a reward which is more
“ precious than gold.

“ ABEL THOMAS.

“ 7th month, 7th, 1781.”

He was favoured to return to his family
and friends in peace, and delivered up his

certificate, gave an affecting account of his exercises, and in the following year, 1782, was again drawn forth in a visit to Friends in some parts of Pennsylvania. To mention all his religious visits may not be necessary; but from 1761 to the year 1800, it appears by the records of Exeter Monthly Meeting, that in addition to his religious engagements among Friends in his own neighbourhood, he was very often from home on this weighty service. In 1801, he removed with his family to Monallen, in Adams County, Pennsylvania, and whilst a member there, was also diligently engaged in the work of the ministry, both at home and abroad.

Thus, with small intermissions, he was assiduously labouring to promote the cause of his Divine Master, in turning the minds of his fellow men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; which honourable service continued to be as his meat and drink, until a short time before his decease. A few months previous to which, having been, as was often his practice, looking over his past life, sensible of the infirmities which attended him, he said, "I am near eternity, my own nothingness is before

me every day, on remembering my unworthiness;” yet he was steadfast in the faith, and enabled to express himself with clearness respecting the true and only path to Christian perfection.

At one time he said, “*That* wisdom and knowledge which I have gained, is from striving to follow Jesus Christ in the regeneration; this is foolishness unto the children of this world, who are pleasing themselves, or striving so to do, with the perishing enjoyments of this present world.” Again—“I was always seen at our meetings for worship and discipline when at home, was silent in those for discipline, being of little account, except in secret prayer, that the Father of mercies might be our preserver in the meekness of wisdom. To be a pattern of sobriety and humility amongst men, was a lesson which my Master gave me to learn, and I found it hard and mortifying to experience a growth therein, notwithstanding my education and low degree in the world was favourable thereto.”

On recurring again to the subject of meetings for discipline, under a weighty sense of

the temptations and snares with which the enemy of all righteousness presents to the active, busy spirit of the natural man, prompting him to attempt the performance of that which can only be truly done through the spirit of Christ, the blessed Head of the Church; in allusion to such subtle suggestions made at times to his own mind, he signifies that "it would seem I had not much more to do than to learn to be active in treating with others who had not arrived to such a growth in orderly walking as I had. Here is a rock, against which many of my fellow members have been dashed, and been broken to shivers. This is a subtle delusion of the transformed angel of light, which in a considerable degree hath put a stop to their gradual growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, a measure of whose fulness, secretly enjoyed in the inner man, breathes peace, love, and good will to the fallen children of men."

Again. "Ever blessed Father of Mercies, in and through thy son Jesus Christ, whom my soul loveth, I intreat thee to keep me in that love wherewith thou hast loved me from my youth up. Satan had wounded and robbed me; I had lost sight of my Beloved; but

remembering that thou art merciful, and would, for the cries of the poor, arise in thy tender compassion, I became acquainted with thee through thy dear son, Jesus Christ; hence I love thee more than all these fading, perishing enjoyments. I cannot describe the thankfulness and humble adoration which I feel in giving thanks to thy great name, with thy dear son Jesus Christ. Preserve me from offending thee, either in thought, word, or deed. No tongue can express to the full, nor the most ready writer's pen describe, what thou hast taught me in the great deeps: that thou, who art King of kings and Lord of lords, should take notice of thy afflicted children who call upon thee in the depths of distress, when none in all the earth can give relief."

Again. "I am now looking towards a vast eternity near at hand, where I hope to rest, although my pain is great at times, both day and night. On an inquiry concerning my past long life, tracing my steps, I do comfortably find, that I have fought a good fight, and have kept the faith. I feel comfortable in being favoured with ability from all the powers of love in me, to ascribe high praises

to a merciful God, through his son Jesus Christ. I am often dejected through fear of offending him whom my soul loveth, and when I can feel him near, I can be as cheerful as a child in a watchful state."

Although his infirmities increased, with great pain, yet he was preserved in much patience and resignation, and towards the last, would often say, that in a little while he should land on that shore, where he would have trouble no more. He departed this life at Monallen, the 21st of Third month, 1816, in the seventy-ninth year of his age.

THE END.

AMONGST THE COLLECTION OF

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Memoirs of the Life and Religious Experience of William Lewis, late of Bristol.

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